C.I. Scofield

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The name of C.I. Scofield is not usually associated with liberalism, yet Scofield's roots lie at the heart of the post 1865 Congregationalism where Charles Finney made his home. Finney's Congregationalism promoted a doctrine of polar opposites, as previously indicated (See Charles Finney).

Fruit of the Root

The 1865 Statement of Faith of the Congregational churches, brought the two mutually exclusive theological systems of Calvin and Arminius into a kind of harmony, and that by fiat. The purpose behind such a Statement of Faith was, no doubt the reconstruction of America, which had been torn asunder by the Civil War. While the end may have been honorable, the means severed theology from both reason and history.

What did Scofield share with liberalism?

Oswald T. Allis put his finger on it more than half a century ago. Writing in the Evangelical Quarterly (January, 1936), he proposed that Dispensationalism shares the fundamental error that is made by the so-called "higher criticism." It is now obvious that the higher criticism movement placed itself and its proponents above Scripture in order to

critique Scripture's structures and sources. That process has been very destructive of the "high view" of Scripture that is foundational to the historical, orthodox doctrines of the faith. Despite the apparent differences between Scofieldism and higher criticism they share a foundational tenet.

"Higher Criticism divides Scripture up into documents which differ from or contradict on another. Dispensationalism divides the Bible up into dispensations which differ from or even contradict one another; and so radical is this difference as viewed by the extremist that the Christian of today who accepts the Dispensationalist view finds his Bible (the part directly intended for him) shrunk to the compass of the Imprisonment Epistles" (Allis, Evangelical Quarterly, Jan., 1936).

Both tear apart the unity of Scripture by cutting and pasting either Scripture itself (as does higher criticism) or biblical history (as does Dispensationalism) to suit their theories. The methods of both undermine biblical unity, albeit different aspects of biblical unity. While higher criticism cuts the Bible into pieces and destroys its unity, so Dispensationalism cuts biblical history into pieces and destroys its unity. And interestingly enough, both share the same roots-theologically, historically, and denominationally.There are two concerns here: 1) dispensationalism as theology, and 2) Scofield, the man. Since the theology comes from the man, let's consider the man first.

Scofield The Man

Genealogical data has been gathered about the Scofield family from the records of various Congregational churches in New York State. Cyrus Ingreson Scofield was born in Michigan on August 19, 1843. His birth place is important because he was later awarded the Confederate Cross of Honor. His mother died the year he was born, probably from delivery complications. His father remarried shortly thereafter.

When the Civil War began, 1861, Cyrus, 17-years-old, was visiting his sister in Tennessee. Records show that he then enlisted in the 7th Regiment of the Tennessee Infantry on May 20, 1861. While it was irregular-even illegal according to regulations, it was not unusual for a teenagers to join the Confederate army. He simply listed his age as twenty-one. Curiously, he never returned to his birth place in Michigan, though he traveled the world.

Suspicion being what it was during the Civil War, official word finally reached Company H of the 7th Tennessee in August, 1862, that an “alien” was in their midst. A man from Michigan had joined the Confederate army. An order was issued to release Private Scofield, but the 7th Tennessee was about enter a significant engagement of the enemy at Antietam. When Scofield later indicated that the Cross of Honor was awarded for his service at Antietam, no one noticed that Southerners refer to it as the battle of Sharpsburg. If you know anything about Civil War buffs today, you will know that such an apparently minor point still makes a major difference.

It should also be noted that the Confederate Cross of Honor was not an award given by the Confederate government. Rather, it was given to Confederate war veterans by the United Daughters of the Confederacy beginning in 1900, thirty-eight years after the Sharpsburg/Antietam battle. Nor is there any evidence that the young Scofield was converted or effected by the revival that swept the Confederate army, in that he admitted that he was ignorant of things Christian.

By September,1862, Scofield had been discharged from the Confederate army by his own request. Four years later, September 21, 1866, he married Leontine Cerre before a justice of the peace in St. Louis. A civil wedding was his only option because the Cerre family was Catholic, and he was not. We can only assume that the lack of a religious ceremony was not a problem for Cyrus. Their first child, Abigail Leontine Teresa Scofield, was born July 13, 1867, in St. Joseph, Missouri-across the state from St. Louis. Abigail was baptized in St., Joseph's Cathedral, St. Joseph, Missouri. Their next child, Marie Helene, was born October 4, 1869, in St. Louis and baptized the same month at St. Therese de Avilla Church in St. Louis. Following that baptism, the Scofields moved to Atchinson, Kansas.

Kansas Politics

Cyrus worked for John J. Ingalls, a Kansas lawyer and politician, prior to his admission to the Kansas bar. The only case that he is known for sure to have worked on was a large land grant case that involved some holdings of his wife's family, the Regis Loisel case. It involved thousands of acres of land which eventually became available for settlement. Plots could be purchased from Scofield in Atchinson.

Scofield's entry into politics occurred at approximately the same period of time as his work on the Regis Loisel case. The 1872 Kansas elections were particularly volatile. Charges of corruption against the Republican incumbent were voiced, and in the politicking that followed, Scofield nominated John J. Ingalls for Congress. Following a dramatic discovery and exposure of campaign bribery by the incumbent, Ingalls won, taking his seat in the 43rd Congress.

March 11, 1873, John J. Ingalls submitted a petition to President Grant recommending Scofield for the position of United States District Attorney for the District of Kansas. Acceptance of the appointment made Scofield, at 29 the youngest District Attorney in the country. At his oath of office, June 8, 1873, Scofield solemnly swore that he had "…never voluntarily borne arms against the United States since I have been a citizen thereof, that I have voluntarily given no aid, countenance, counsel or encouragement to persons engaged in armed hostility thereto …that I have not yielded a voluntary support to any pretended government authority, power of constitution, within the United States, hostile or inimical thereto…." This oath of office is particularly troubling because some twenty-seven years later he received the Confederate Cross of Honor for service at Sharpsburg.

On December 14, 1873, the Daily Times of Leavenworth carried a story that stated that an affidavit existed in which Scofield had been paid a sum of money to keep a certain man from being brought to trial. Joseph Canfield in his book, The Incredible Scofield and His Book (Ross House Books, Vallencito, CA, 1988), said that "if that report could be

substantiated, Scofield's description of the 'Loisel case' to the Dispensational constituency, through Luther Rees, was unprincipled." The fact is that Scofield resigned his position as District Attorney December 20, 1873, just six months after taking office.

Emeline Scofield Papin, Cyrus' sister, drew up her will November 7, 1877, bequeathing equal share of her substantial estate to her siblings, Cyrus, Laura, and Victorine. But she stipulated that if Cyrus and Leontine were not living together, the share for Cyrus must be shared equally with his wife. Emeline took care to address a situation that she thought might occur. That same year the St. Louis City Directory listed Cyrus I. Scofield as a practicing lawyer.

Interestingly, the Circuit Court of St. Louis had on its docket Case 0 44252, Jephtha H. Simpson vs. Cyrus I. Scofield, Emeline E. Papin, and C.F. Betts. It seems that Cyrus had used a $200 note, signed by Emeline, to pay a debt. When Mr. Simpson tried to cash the note, Emeline refused to pay. Her response to the petition served on her by a deputy of the County Sheriff's Office stipulated that she never signed any such note. Cyrus could not be found.

Another endorsed promissory note for $900 made to the order of Emeline E. Papin (like a check made to Emeline and endorsed by her) made its way to courts on April 1878, as well, Case 46333. Similarly, Emeline denied ever signing it, and Cyrus could not be located. At a May 6 hearing the case was dismissed by the plaintiff. It is not known if restitution was made.

A similar situation of a note made with Emeline's endorsement is found in the Court Docket 45326, August 14, 1877. And again, Emeline denied ever signing such a note. An article in the November 7, 1879, issue of the Republican, a St. Louis newspaper, confirms that Scofield had been arrested and charged with forgery, but that the case had been dropped.

Forward With Moody

Late in 1879 D.L. Moody was making final arrangements for a St. Louis evangelistic campaign, and the name of C.I. Scofield suddenly became known in a subgroup that utterly remote from any he had ever known, as he later reported to have worked in that campaign. The usual story is that Scofield was saved from the demon drink and was a changed man. Nothing is impossible with the Lord! Tom McPheeters is credited with presenting Christ to Scofield, who was reported to have accepted Christ in McPheeters' law office during this period. It also appears that Leontine and her children had remained in Atchinson. They were not with Cyrus in St. Louis during these years.

Scofield's early theological training came under the Rev. James H. Brookes, pastor of the Walnut Street Presbyterian Church, St. Louis. Brookes was a friend and student of John Nelson Darby, the Plymouth Brethren leader. "J.N. Darby is usually regarded as the founder of Dispensationalism" (The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church, Zondervan, 1978). Scofield's biographer, Charles Trumbull, stated that Scofield was ignorant of things Christian up to 1879, the year he assigned to his conversion.

In July, 1880, Scofield joined Pilgrim Congregational Church in St. Louis. About this same time, the St. Louis Association of the Congregational Churches issued him a license to preach. He immediately organized the Hyde Park Congregational Church and continued to serve it until 1882.

A story that was printed in both the Atchinson Patriot and later in the Daily Capital (August 27, 1881) reported that "the last personal knowledge that Kansans have had of this peer among scalawags, was when about four years ago, after a series of forgeries and confidence games he left the state and a destitute family and took refuge in Canada. For a time he kept undercover, nothing being heard of him until within the past two years when he turned up in St. Louis, where he had a wealthy widowed sister living who has generally come to the front and squared up Cyrus' little follies and foibles by paying good round sums of money. Within the past year, however, Cyrus committed a series of St. Louis forgeries that could not be settled so easily, and the erratic young gentleman was compelled to linger in the St. Louis jail for a period of six months."

While this story may be part fabrication with the intent to slander, it suggests that there are some indiscrepancies in the life and story of C.I. Scofield. At the very least we know that, after several filings, a decree of divorcement was issued to Leontine Scofield on December 8, 1883, in Atchinson, Kansas, Case 2681. At this point, Scofield was four-years-old in his Christian life and had been ordained into the Christian ministry by Congregationalists, who apparently knew nothing of Leontine or Scofield's children.

A year prior to his divorce (1882) he received a call to First Congregational Church, Dallas, Texas. At first many Texas Southerners in the community viewed him as a Northerner. But when they learned of his involvement in the Confederate Army, he was widely accepted as a brother, though they couldn't understand why he would preach in a Yankee church. Nonetheless, an Ordination Council had been held for Scofield as part of the first meeting of the North Texas Congregational Association held at First Congregational Church in Dallas on October 17, 1883. The Dallas church grew quickly from 17 to 250 in just a few years.

On March 11, 1884, he married Hettie Van Wark, just three months after his divorce was official. While it is burdensome to read and comprehend the various dates given, it should be obvious of their importance because much of Scofield's paper trail does not square with his own stories about his life.

Noel Paul Scofield was born December 22, 1888 in Michigan. Emeline Papin died October 25, 1889, and as her will stipulated payments of one-sixth the estate were paid to Cyrus and Leontine, his divorced wife.

Higher Calling

Scofield broke into print in 1888 with a booklet titled, Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth, which presented his developing dispensational understanding. It was printed by Loizeaux Brothers of New York, a Plymouth Brethren printing company. He immediately began to teach and preach at various Bible conferences. "He was primarily concerned with the Prophetic Bible Conference which was to reshape a significant part of

American Protestantism" (Canfield, p. 114.). He was also a regular presenter at the Niagara Bible Conferences, where his theology was honed.

In 1890 he began publishing a monthly magazine, The Believer, in order to 1) bear testimony to a "body of truth being neglected," 2) aid Bible study, and 3) correct the "nearly complete effacement of the line separating the Church from the world." He also began his Comprehensive Bible Correspondence Course in the same year. Scofield became President of the Board of Trustees of Lake Charles College, a Congregational school in Lake Charles, Louisiana. In addition, he was also head of the Southwestern School of the Bible in Dallas, forerunner of Dallas Theological Seminary. In 1886 he became the Superintendent of the American Home Missionary Society for Texas and Louisiana, a Congregational mission society. All of this extra work demanded much of Scofield's time, thus his church provided an annual five-month paid vacation

Luther Rees, a graduate of Scofield's Bible classes, had been filling the pulpit during Scofield's long vacations. Rees was ordained at First Congregational Church in 1892. A pamphlet titled, Jesus Christ as Preacher, the sermon given at Rees' ordination ceremony, bears the heading "Sermon preached by Dr. C.I. Scofield." This is the first known instance of Scofield's use of the title, "Dr." However, there is no indication anywhere that he ever received any doctorate from any school, not even an honorary doctorate. For that matter there is no evidence that he ever

attended or graduated from any institution of higher learning, neither in law nor in religion. Its not that such degrees are all that important, but that he claimed to have something he did not have.

In Rees' ordination sermon "Dr." Scofield said that people "are amazed when (they) turn back to the preaching of Finney and find that the very substance of it was stiff doctrine. But because it was *God's* (italics in original) doctrine, men fell in thousands at the feet of Jesus, so in our day we find Spurgeon and Moody, preachers of the dear old doctrines" (Canfield, p. 136). But, as previously discussed, Finney's doctrines were 180 degrees from Spurgeon's, and did not represent the old, tried and true biblical teaching. Nonetheless, Scofield revealed that his own teaching belonged to Finney's school of thought.

In 1895 D.L. Moody returned to Dallas for more evangelistic meetings. Moody had come to Dallas in 1866 at Scofield's invitation, so it was not surprising that he was a featured speaker at the Moody event. Scofield had also been invited by Moody to preach at Moody's home church, Trinity Congregational Church, in East Northfield, Massachusetts.

Trinity Congregational Church issued a call to Scofield late in 1895. He was able to maintain his demanding conference schedule by maintaining his long vacations at East Northfield as he had at First Church in Dallas. Thus, he was instrumental in founding the influential Niagara Conference in July, 1901.

Literati Extraordinaire

The other act of 1901 that has escaped public attention was his admission into the Lotos Club in New York City. The Lotos Club, an exclusive social literati club, sponsored and mentored various kinds of artists. Article I, Section II of its Constitution reads, “The primary object of this Club shall be to promote social intercourse among journalists, artists, and members of the musical and dramatic professions, and representatives, amateurs, and friends of Literature, Science, and the Fine Arts: and at least one third of the members shall be connected with said classes” (Canfield, p. 173). Not the usual domain of Fundamentalist Christians.

Scofield’s participation in the Lotos Club is beyond denial. The 1912 Who’s Who in America lists the Lotos Club as Scofield’s address. A letter written in 1905 to A.C. Gaebelin was written on Lotos Club stationery. According to The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church, Gaebelin had been a pastor in New York City, “where he began a remarkable ministry to the Jews.” Apparently, he wrote and published his particular, dispensational understanding of prophecy all over the world, but focusing particularly on the Middle East. It is also interesting to note that Samuel Untermeyer, a notorious criminal lawyer, was on the Literary Committee of the Lotos Club at the time of Scofield’s induction. Canfield tells us that Untermyer was particularly interested in The Zionist Movement. Coincidence? Perhaps. But what in the world was Scofield doing in the Lotos Club?

According to Gaebelein, Scofield first suggested the idea of a reference Bible to him at a Sea Cliff Conference meeting, at a wealthy resort in New York. Gaebelein suggested that he (Gaebelein) "should speak to a number of brethren about the publication of the Reference Bible and sound them out as to their support" (Gaebelein, as quoted in Canfield, p. 175). Alwyn Ball, a New York real estate man, was approached. Gaebelein reported, "He fairly bubbled over with joy, and fully endorsed the plan; and, better than that, Mr. Ball pledged a considerable sum of money to assist the project" (Canfield, p. 175.).

Others were contacted and similar support expressed. He discussed the idea with Francis Fitch, who had published Scofield's Bible Correspondence Course. The principle work of Fitch, a Plymouth Brethren, was the publishing of New York Stock Exchange lists. Fitch, who had worked with Scofield before, was concerned that such a project was beyond the abilities of Scofield. Gaebelein reported that Fitch said, "I know he (Scofield) can never finish such a work" (Canfield, p. 175.). As it turned, out Fitch was convinced and lent his support to the project, but did not publish the Reference Bible.

Contrary to popular opinion among Fundamentalists, Scofield's work was not popular among many Christians at the time. Rather, his popularity was limited to a small group of Bible prophecy students, many of whom were quite wealthy.

Scofield resigned the East Northfield pulpit in 1903. Ill health and a busy schedule kept him from his pastoral duties. Nonetheless, Cyrus and Hettie traveled to Europe in 1904 to work on the Reference Bible. They met with

Robert Scott, a publisher in London who suggested that none other than Oxford University Press ought to publish the Reference Bible. When Scofield replied that he had no contacts at the Oxford Press, Scott arranged a meeting with Henry Frowde, the head of the home division of Oxford University Press. Work on the Reference Bible was to progress on this trip. Several large-page, wide-margin notebooks were purchased. The plan was to paste the text of the entire Bible page by page into these notebooks, and his reference notes would then be added as he worked them up. Boxes of these notebooks traveled with the Scofields all over Europe and the Middle East.

Upon returning, Scofield again suffered illness. Writing on Lotos Club stationery, Scofield wrote to Gaebelein suggesting that Gaebelein work on the Reference Bible. That note reads, “By all means follow your own views of prophetic analysis. I sit at your feet when it comes to prophecy, and congratulate in advance the future readers of my Bible on having in their hands a safe, clear, sane guide through, what to most is a labyrinth” (Canfield, p. 188).

Trumbull (Scofield’s biographer) stated that Scofield “covered the whole field of such scholarship, whether friendly or unfriendly to the Bible.” Anyone who knows the depth and breadth of such an effort knows that it requires a lifetime of intense study. That level of study does not appear to be a characteristic found in Scofield’s life.

Scofield acknowledged the influence of two scholars whom he admired, and to whom he was introduced through his association with the Oxford Press. Wescott and Hort had advanced a new theory about New Testament

sources, which laid the ground for the proliferation of modern Bible translations. But curiously, the work of Wescott and Hort utterly opposed the King James Version of the Bible, labeling it as faulty and error prone. (For information about Wescott and Hort, see Which Version is Best? by Phillip A. Ross.)

Scofield signed the contract with Oxford University Press in New York on June 5, 1907. The oddity of a major, world-wide press signing a contract with a little known, sectarian preacher grows with one's knowledge and experience of what it takes to get published. Oxford University Press is not known for its support of Christian causes, particularly sectarian or Fundamental causes. Oxford did not sign with Scofield for altruistic purposes. Their first interest is selling books for profit.

The 1908 annual report of First Congregational Church in Dallas included a report by Scofield, who had returned as senior pastor. Denominational difficulties were reported as "the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy was reaching the simmering stage" (Canfield, p. 202).

Magnam Opus

When the Scofield Reference Bible was officially released on January 15, 1909, Scofield was in Dallas presiding over a church business meeting. Again, it seems odd that there is no record of any celebration of such an historic event at the Oxford headquarters in New York. The business of that meeting in Dallas was the withdrawal of First Church from the Lone

Star Association in light of the Association's Modernist tendencies. Scofield approved of the withdrawal, and severed his own connection with Congregationalism in 1910.

Scofield sent copies of his new Bible to each of his daughters in Kansas. Obviously, he had not forgotten them, but evidence shows that he had little contact with them or financial support for them as they grew into adulthood. He wrote to his daughter Helene on September 30, 1909. "When I get rich I am going to have 3 homes-one in a winter apartment on Washington Heights, N.Y. City, one at Crestwood, one at Sorrento, Italy. …I shall have a large lecture room in the Carnegie Institute, & hold forth to all & sundry who may come for biblical instruction say 3 afternoons & 3 evenings in the week. At Sorrento & Crestwood I shall write books-un peu-but mostly loaf and invite my soul" (Canfield, p. 224). Hardly the values usually attributed to Fundamentalists!

1910 brought the publication of Addresses on Prophecy, by C.I. Scofield, published by A.C. Gaebelein. In that book Scofield asks, "Is it not so much wealth, luxury, power, pomp, and pride that have served to deflect the church from her appointed course…? The church, therefore, has failed to follow her appointed pathway of separation, holiness, heavenliness and testimony to an absent but coming Christ; she has turned aside from that purpose to the work of civilizing the world, building magnificent temples, and acquiring earthly power and wealth, and in this way, has ceased to follow in the footsteps of Him who had not where to lay His head."

The 1911 Who's Who in America, Vol. 7, listed:

SCOFIELD, Cyrus Ingerson, clergyman; b. Lenawee Co., Mich., Aug. 19, 1843, and reared in Wilson Co., Tenn; S. Elias and Abl (Goodrich) S: pvtly fitted for coll., but univ. studies interrupted by breaking out of Civil War; m. Hettie van Wart, of Ypsilanti, Mich., July 14, 1884, Pvt. Co. H. 7th Tenn. Inf. May 1861 to close of Civil War; served in Army of Northern Va. under Gen. Lee, and awarded Cross of Honor for valor at battle of Antietam; admitted to Kan. bar, 1869, mem. Kan. Ho. of Rep. form Atchinson and Nemaha cos., 1870-1; apptd U.S. atty. for Kan. by President Grant, 1873. Converted to Christian religion at St. Louis, 1879, ordained Congregational ministry, 1883, pastor First Ch., Dallas, Tx., 1882-1895, Moody Ch. Northfield, Mass. 1895-1902 and First Ch., Dallas, 1905-7. Has lectured extensively on Bible subjects in Europe and America. Mem. S.A.R. Colonial Founders, Soc. Colonial Wars, Club Lotos, Author Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth, 1885, Addresses on Prophecy 1909, The Doctrine of The Holy Spirit, 1906, Lectures on Galatians, 1907 Editor, Scofield Reference Bible 1910, Bible of 1911, 1911 (sic). Head of Scofield Corr. Bible Sch. Home, "Crestwood", Ashuelot, N.H., and Lotos Club, New York. Office 156 5th Ave., New York.

There are several inaccuracies and omissions in this listing, which could have only come from Scofield himself because Who's Who gathers information from the individuals themselves. There is no mention of his first wife, Leontine, or his daughters, Abigail and Marie Helene, nor of his divorce, nor of his Son by Hettie, Noel, or of his "law practice" in St. Louis.

In 1915 Scofield began writing for The Sunday School Times, the same year he organized The Community Church of Douglastown, New York. His Bible Correspondence Course was taken over by Moody Press and remains

part of Moody's ministry today. A revision of The Scofield Reference Bible was published in 1917 because of several glaring errors. Gaebelein contributed significantly to that update.

In 1920 Charles Trumbull, a well respected religious journalist and Yale graduate, interviewed Scofield for a series of articles on his life and work for The Sunday School Times. Oxford University Press later printed them as The Life Story of C.I. Scofield, which until Canfield's book (1988) was the only published biography of Scofield. Canfield has unearthed much more information about Scofield than has been previously published, and discovered many errors and contradictions in Trumbull's biography-errors and contradictions that a nationally known, Yale journalist should not make-the likes of which are not found in any of Trumbull's other published works.

In a letter dated May 3, 1921, from Scofield to his daughter Abigail, he confesses some measure of continuing love for Leontine and his daughters by her, though he admits that he never gave any proof of it. The letter demonstrates that, though he never visited or supported his Atchinson family, he never forgot them. But neither did he mention them to his Christian friends or reading public. During the same month he wrote and signed his last will and testament. Neither Abigail nor Marie Helene were mention and neither shared in his estate.

Final Reckoning

He died July 24, 1921. His funeral was held in the First Baptist Church near Flushing because the Douglastown Community Church had no building. People from around the world noted his passing, but there was no one from Atchinson, Kansas, at his funeral.

His entire estate was bequeathed to Hettie and Noel. There was no mention of his daughters by Leontine, or of his first wife, Leontine. Nothing was mentioned about giving anything to any Christian ministry, nor any educational, social, or charitable establishment. Nothing. Nor did his will mention anything about his faith or the Lord. Apparently, there is little information at all about the royalties of the Scofield Reference Bible.

While working on an unpublished dissertation on the life of Scofield, William BeVier contacted Noel, Scofield's surviving son, in 1960. However, no information about his father has ever come from Noel. Noel responded to BeVier's request, "Regret to advise you I cannot give you the data requested and please do not bother me in the future." Canfield reports that "neither Noel, his wife, nor the granddaughter played any role in the Dispensational movement or its evangelical successor" (Canfield p. 297).

The life of Scofield through the eyes of Canfield, whose research is well documented, is truly incredible. But what can we make of the theology that Scofield championed through is best selling Reference Bible. We have already seen that it is built upon an Arminian foundation and borrowed heavily from the Plymouth Brethren theologian, J.N. Darby.

Dispensationalism

Dispensationalism teaches that there have been a variety of dispensations or administrations throughout history. At the heart of the differing dispensations have been different methods or ways that God has dealt with His people. According to Scofield, a dispensation is "a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God" (Douglas, p. 303-italics original). Scofield listed seven dispensations: Innocence, Conscience, Human Government, Promise, Law, Grace, and the Kingdom.

Dispensationalism's unique contribution to theology is the belief that God treats or judges people differently in each dispensation. God's treated people differently during the dispensation of Conscience than He did during the dispensation of Innocence, different during the dispensation of Promise than during Human Government, different during the dispensation of the Grace than the Law. This view is, however, contrary to historic, orthodox Christianity (what has been understood to be historic, orthodox Christianity until the Modern Age, that is).

The older view taught that God always treated or judged people by the same criteria because God is just and never changing. Particularly, the churches of the Protestant Reformation championed this view when they called the Church of Rome to Reformation. The Protestant churches turned away from the innovations and changes brought about by Rome. They not only went back to the Old Testament, but they returned to the original sources to study it.

The danger inherent in Dispensationalism is that people will believe that only certain parts of the Bible are relevant to them because they live in a particular dispensation. Too often such people believe that they can dispense with God's law, that the whole of the Old Testament law no longer applies because we live in a dispensation of grace. However, the founders of Protestantism-Luther, Calvin, Knox, Owen, etc.-proclaimed that salvation was by grace alone, start to finish, cover-to-cover. Salvation has always been by grace. Abraham was saved by grace, as was Noah and Moses and Isaiah, etc.

The thing that people don't realize is that Dispensationalism is a relatively new theology that was popularized by Scofield and his Reference Bible. How did it become so popular? It is easy to understand, and was made readily available through Oxford University Press, a very liberal publisher.

Buy the book: The Incredible Scofield

Wikipedia Biography

Cyrus Scofield was born in Lenawee County, Michigan, but during the American Civil War he served for a year as a private in the 7th Tennessee Infantry, C.S.A.. By 1866 he was in St. Louis, Missouri working in his brother-in-law's law office. Admitted to the Kansas bar in 1869, he was elected to the Kansas legislature as a Republican in 1871 and 1872 and was appointed U.S. attorney for the district of Kansas. Probably because of alcoholism, he abandoned both his career and his first wife and two daughters. She divorced him in 1883, and the same year he married Hettie Hall von Wartz, with whom he had a son.

After his conversion to evangelical Christianity in 1879, Scofield assisted in the St. Louis campaign conducted by Dwight L. Moody and served as the secretary of the St. Louis YMCA. Significantly, Scofield came under the mentorship of James H. Brookes, pastor of Walnut Street Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, a prominent dispensationalist premillennialist.

In 1883 Scofield was ordained as a Congregationalist minister, and he accepted the pastorate of small mission church founded by that denomination, which became the First Congregational Church, Dallas, Texas (now Scofield Memorial Church). The church grew from fourteen to over five hundred members before he resigned its pastorate in 1895.

Scofield also served as secretary of the American Home Missionary Society of Texas and Louisiana; and in 1890, he founded Lake Charles College in Lake Charles, Louisiana. As the author of the pamphlet, “Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth” (1888), Scofield himself soon became a leader in dispensational premillennialism, a forerunner of twentieth-century Christian fundamentalism.

In 1895, Scofield was called as pastor of Moody’s church, the Trinitarian Congregational Church of East Northfield, Massachusetts, and he also took charge of Moody’s Northfield Bible Training School. Although, in theory, Scofield returned to his Dallas pastorate in 1903, his projected reference Bible consumed much of his energy, and for much of the time before its publication, he was either sick or in Europe. Nevertheless, when the Scofield Reference Bible was published in 1909, it quickly became the

most influential statement of dispensational premillennialism, and Scofield's popularity as Bible conference speaker increased as his health continued to decline.

Scofield shortly left the liberalizing Congregational Church to become a Southern Presbyterian and moved to the New York City area where he supervised a correspondence and lay institute, the New York Night School of the Bible. In 1914 he founded the Philadelphia School of the Bible in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (now Philadelphia Biblical University).

Scofield's second wife proved a faithful companion and editing assistant, but his relationships with his children seem to have been distant at best. Scofield died at his home in Douglaston, Long Island, in 1921.

Scofield's correspondence Bible study course was the basis for his Reference Bible, an annotated, and widely circulated, study Bible first published in 1909 by Oxford University Press. Scofield's notes teach dispensationalism, a theology that was in part conceived in the early nineteenth century by the Anglo-Irish John Nelson Darby, who like Scofield had also been trained as a lawyer. Dispensationalism emphasizes the distinctions between the New Testament Church and ancient Israel of the Old Testament. Scofield believed that between creation and the final judgment there were seven distinct eras of God's dealing with man and that these eras were a framework around which the message of the Bible could be explained. It was largely through the influence of Scofield's notes that dispensationalism and premillennialism became influential among fundamentalist Christians in the United States.